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LETTER FROM ESTONIA: SHALE EXPLOITATION

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[This letter opens by comparing the great shale deposits along the Gulf of Finland in Estonia with a legendary national treasure buried there, and by describing the great present activity in developing those deposits.]

Ub'ya, one of the very old mines, is still operating. Everything here is done by hand. The daily output is some tens of tons. There are no drainage pumps; ventilation is primitive. The pit resembles an old picture from a history of mining in the 17th Century.

Mine Kyava 1 was the pride of bourgeois Estonia. The old miners remember the time when the mine shafts were flooded and they had to float along, as in a boat, in box-like contraptions, in order to reach the mining areas. This mine, now called Kyava 2, is charged and mechanized as are most of the mines. Yet, this improved industrial offspring of bourgeois Estonia, despite its thorough reconstruction, looks like an old steam locomotive beside a powerful motor streamliner when compared with newly constructed mines.

One of these giant enterprises, at present in its beginning stage, is Mine (Shakhta) No 10, built by socialist Estonia. Soon it will produce more shale than all the mines of bourgeois Estonia combined. The huge chambers, from which ore from the shafts will be brought by electric locomotives, remind one of the big stations of the Moscow subway. Everything in the mines is mechanized, from the mining of shale with cross-cutting machines to the sorting and loading on trains. The mine building, containing shower baths, medical facilities, and a movie hall, reminds one of a sanatorium. Miners will work by electric light and will be

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exposed to artificial sunlight on their way from the mine to the surface.

Following Mine No 10, Mine No 6, almost finished, will start operation soon. Mines No 2, 11, 4, 1, and 8 are all under construction. They will begin operation within this Five-Year Plan and will increase shale output seven or eight times. In this formerly deserted area, the following new towns are partly built and inhabited: Akhtme, Kokhtla, Sompa, and the new socialist town of Kokhtla-Yarve. Surveyors and architects are still at work on the but recently deserted shores. Here summer residences for miners, cultural centers and sanatoriums will soon be built. Comfortable transportation will connect these places with the rising cities. The first sanatorium, built on the site of an ancient half-ruined castle, will have its opening on Miners' Day.

The "treasure of Kalevipoyeg" is not merely a huge quantity of shale, to be used as fuel. Shale provides gas, petroleum, gasoline, bitumen, lubricants, and many other useful derivatives discovered by chemists from Tallin, Moscow, and Leningrad. And alongside the mines will rise powerful new factories for processing shale. A gas plant is being built at Kokhtla-Yarve as well as a gas pipe line leading to Leningrad. In 2 or 3 months its first supply will flow to Leningrad, and will improve the living standard of hundreds of thousands of residents. The construction of the pipe line stretches over 205 kilometers.

[The concluding paragraphs describe the exploits of individual workers in the development of the shale industry.]

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